

**APG ADVISORY CENTER
ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, MARYLAND 21005-5001**

CIVILIAN PERSONNEL BULLETIN

August 2004

No. 2-04

IN THIS ISSUE

- APG Advisory Center has a new Web Site
 - Job Information Center Services
 - Medical Donor Programs
 - Advancing Your Education
 - Notification of Death of a Civilian Employee
 - Thrift Saving Plan (TSP) Modernization Effort – TSP Withdrawal Information
 - National Security Personnel System (NSPS)
 - Political Activity Reminders
 - Retirement Application Assistance
 - SAW
 - FEGLI Open Season
-

OUR NEW NAME

With the realignment of the APG Civilian Personnel Advisory Center from the Garrison, APG to the US Army Civilian Human Resources Agency, Northeast Region, our name has been changed to reflect our new chain of command. We are now known as the APG Advisory Center. Our complete new address is:

Department of the Army
Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, G-1
USACHRA, Northeast Region, APG Advisory Center
ATTN: PECP-NER-G
2201 Aberdeen Boulevard
Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21005-5001

APG Advisory Center Has A New Web Site

The APG Advisory Center is committed to providing our customers, Department of the Army civilian professionals, managers and employees essential information. One of the communication tools used to assist civilians and their leaders in providing Civilian Personnel support is the APG Advisory Center web page. Our newly designed and updated site provides information and assistance on issues such as job opportunities, benefits, salary schedules, Leave Transfer Program, and training with links to other informative sites. Managers now have access to information designed to assist them with their daily personnel issues. The new site provides users with easy access to information and guidance concerning Civilian Personnel issues and information systems such as PERMISS, Civilian Personnel Online and MyPay. Our new Veterans and Retirees sections provides links to several informative web sites such as the Social Security Administration, Disabled American Veterans and Medicare. We hope you will add our new site to your favorites list. The new web address is <http://www.apg.army.mil/garrison/cpac>. Point of contact is Lisa McKinney, email lisa.mckinney@usag.apg.army.mil.

Self-Help Job Information Center

The Civilian Personnel Advisory Center in partnership with Army Community Service (ACS), Garrison, APG opened a Job Information Center in Building 2754, Room 203 on 1 March 2004. The Center is open Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and is equipped with seven computer stations, printer, fax, copier, and phone. Step-by-step guides are available to assist job seekers in using the various Army automated programs to search for job openings, develop their resume, and transmit job applications.

As a current Federal employee, you must use the same automated programs to locate promotion opportunities, vacancies, etc. at APG and throughout Department of Army. You may use the facilities at the Center or simply log onto <http://www.cpol.army.mil>, and click on the link "Search for Jobs, Vacancy Announcement Board" to view Army job announcements.

Medical Donor Programs

To maximize the Army's opportunity to contribute to potentially lifesaving activities, the Army encourages employees to volunteer as candidates for a variety of medical donor programs. These include blood, bone marrow, and organ donor/transplantation programs. Employees participating in such programs should be excused from work without charge to leave within the following parameters.

Blood Donation: Employees who donate blood may be granted excused absence to cover travel to and from the donation site, the donation of blood and recovery. This provision is not intended to cover an employee whose donations involve the need for recurring absence over an extended period (e.g., semi-weekly over four months) or situations in which the employee has blood stored for his/her own use. Authority to excuse an employee for blood donations rests with the supervisor. The maximum excusable time will not exceed four hours except in unusual circumstances.

Organ Donations: With the passing of Public Law 106-56, an employee may use 30 days of paid time off each calendar year to serve as an organ donor. When used, this entitlement needs to be recorded in the time and attendance systems the same way other types of excused absences (e.g. blood donations) are recorded. Although this absence is being administratively recorded as excused absence (administrative leave), leave approving officials need to understand this is a statutory right of an employee. Leave approving officials must ensure authorized limits are not exceeded. In cases where medical procedures and recuperation require absences longer than 30 days, agencies are encouraged to continue to accommodate employees by granting additional time off under other leave policies, i.e., annual, sick, advanced leave, donated leave, and LWOP.

Bone Marrow Donation: Bone marrow donors are entitled to seven days of paid leave each calendar year to serve as a bone marrow donor. In cases where medical procedures and recuperation require absences longer than seven days, agencies are encouraged to continue to accommodate employees by granting additional time off under other leave policies, i.e., annual, sick, advanced leave, donated leave, and LWOP.

Advancing Your Education

Education information was entered in the automated personnel record at the time you were appointed to your Army position. If you continue to advance your education after that date, you must update your personnel record. You may do this by downloading the Education Coding Sheet from our web page (www.apg.army.mil/garrison/cpac; click Training and Career Development) or by requesting a copy from your APG Advisory Center representative. Upon completion of all appropriate information, mail it to the Northeast Civilian Personnel Operations Center, 314 Johnson Street, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21005-5283.

If you are selected for a job with specific education requirements in the future, you will be required to furnish a transcript to verify your education. You should ensure the information you furnish is accurate as fraudulent education claims are subject to disciplinary action that could result in termination from Federal employment. As a reminder, school transcripts and professional licenses or certifications may only be filed in the OPF when the degree or specified college credits are required for the position for which you have been selected. Therefore, you should submit these only upon request.

Notification of Death of a Civilian Employee

In the event of the death of a current civilian employee, managers are reminded they must notify their servicing APG Advisory Center Specialist. The APG Advisory Center Specialist will need the information listed below to provide to the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C). This information is also available on the ABC-C web site.

The APG Advisory Center Specialist will notify the ABC-C, who in turn will contact the survivor(s) listed. In the event the death occurs on a non-workday, please call 410-278-1404 and the Emergency Operations Center will assist you.

Information required by the ABC-C:

Employee's Name
Date of Death
Social Security Number
Retirement System (APG Advisory Center Specialist can verify)
Survivor's Name and Relationship
Next of Kin (if different than survivor and indicate relationship)
Full address and phone number for survivor
Person reporting death and phone number

Point of contact is your servicing APG Advisory Center Specialist.

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Modernization Effort – TSP Withdrawal Packages

The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board has changed the requirements concerning the information that must be issued to separating employees. Previously, personnel offices (Civilian Personnel Operations Centers (CPOCs)) were required to send hard copy TSP withdrawal packages to all separating employees with TSP accounts. Effective immediately, a one-page sheet will fulfill the new requirements of directing employees to the TSP web site to obtain materials and offering those without web access the option to receive a hard copy package upon request.

In coordination with Department of the Army, the Thrift Board has approved the "TSP Withdrawal Sheet" for this purpose. This sheet does not contain information that is likely to become dated; however, the Civilian Human Resource Agency (CHRA) will review this annually.

This change, reflected in the 2004 5 CFR 1650.20(b) should greatly reduce the number of packages sent and will result in better utilization of resources associated with issuing packages within the CPOCs and the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C).

Upon the employees' separation, retirees will receive a point of contact at the ABC-C if they need to request a hard copy package. All other types of separations will receive a point of contact at the CPOC.

The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board announced that it would begin providing toll-free telephone service to Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) participants and beneficiaries beginning 1 July 2004. Those using the toll-free service will be able to obtain TSP account or transaction information via the ThriftLine's automated telephone service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They will also be able to speak to a participant service representative at one of two TSP call centers between the expanded hours of 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

Beginning 1 July 2004, for calls from the U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, the primary toll-free number will be 1-TSP-YOU-FRST (1-877-968-3778) and the TDD number for the hearing impaired will be 1-TSP-THRIFT5 (1-877-847-4385). The current number, 1-504-255-8777, should be used for all other international calls.

National Security Personnel System (NSPS)

The Department of Defense is in the process of designing the NSPS. This new system will impact the 700,000 civilian employees that support our national security mission. The Office of the Secretary of Defense, together with the Defense Services/Agencies and representatives from the Office of Personnel Management, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Merit Systems Protection Board recently completed a three-week NSPS Strategic Review. The purpose of the review was to consider the processes and milestones for NSPS implementation and to identify adjustments that may be necessary. Recommendations were approved by Secretary Rumsfeld on April 13, 2004. The recommendations include a revision to the NSPS implementation schedule. Initial implementation will not begin in October 2004 as previously announced. Currently, a final timetable for implementation within Army has not been established.

For additional information on NSPS just click on the Army NSPS logo found at www.cpol.army.mil. Recent NSPS briefing charts that resulted from the review and the revised notional implementation schedule have been posted. Links to other Agency NSPS web sites are also provided. Additional information will be posted as it becomes available.

Political Activity Reminders

It's election time again, and time to remind civilian employees of the restrictions on their political activities. The list below of Do's and Don't may not cover all situations. If you have questions not addressed here you may contact the U. S. Office of Special Counsel at the number or web site provided.

MAY

- May be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections
- May register and vote as they choose
- May assist in voter registration drives
- May express opinions about candidates and issues
- May contribute money to political organizations
- May attend political fundraising functions
- May attend and be active at political rallies and meetings
- May join and be an active member of a political party or club
- May sign nominating petitions
- May campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, municipal ordinances
- May campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections
- May make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
- May distribute campaign literature in partisan elections
- May hold office in political clubs or parties including serving as a delegate to a convention

MAY NOT

- May not use their official authority or influence to interfere with an election
- May not solicit, accept or receive political contributions unless both individuals are members of the same federal labor organization or employee organization and the one solicited is not a subordinate employee
- May not knowingly solicit or discourage the political activity of any person who has business before the agency
- May not engage in political activity while on duty
- May not engage in political activity while wearing an official uniform
- May not be candidates for public office in partisan elections
- May not wear political buttons on duty

U.S. Office of Special Counsel

Web Site: www.osc.gov

Phone: 1-800-85-HATCH

Retirement Application Assistance

In order to assist civilian employees in their retirement applications, the APG Advisory Center will now review the application prior to the employee sending it to the Army Benefits Center – Civilian (ABC-C). You must still call the ABC-C at 1-877-276-9287 to request your annuity estimate and to have specific retirement benefit questions answered. If your activity is having a VERA/VSIP window, your servicing Human Resource Specialist at the APG Advisory Center will make arrangements for a group session to be scheduled to assist with the application. If you would like to make an appointment to have your retirement application reviewed, or to request an application, you may contact Teri Wright, 410-278-4331 or teri.wright@usag.apg.army.mil.

Senior Army Workforce (SAW)

The Senior Army Workforce (SAW) concept first began in 1999 with the Civilian Personnel Management System XXI (CPMS XXI) study. CPMS XXI is a strategic planning initiative developed to define a process for achieving a trained and ready Army civilian leader workforce for the future. The concept was approved for further development by the ASA (M&RA) on 28 Jan 04. The current personnel system must have a concentrated program to develop the well-rounded civilian leaders required for the transforming Army. Right now, there is no single program that does this. Restructuring and retirements over the next 5-10 years provide the opportunity to transform the civilian HR process to ensure capable leaders in the future. SAW is an opportunity to build a civilian leader who is better educated, well-trained and multi-skilled. The SAW will consist of a core group of about 17,000 people in the civilian grades of GS-12 – GS-15 (and their pay-banded equivalents) who are team leaders, supervisors, managers and program

managers. The SAW will be phased in beginning in FY 05 with GS-15s and continue on a timeline down to the GS-12 level in subsequent fiscal years through FY 09. More information on this initiative can be found at <http://www.cpol.army.mil/library/sawmo>.

FEGLI Open Season

U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Director Kay Coles James announced the first open season for the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program (FEGLI) since 1999. The FEGLI 2004 Open Season will be held from September 1 through September 30, 2004, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the program.

The FEGLI program consists of basic life insurance coverage and three options that include coverage for up to five times an employee's base salary plus coverage for family members. In most cases, a new Federal employee is automatically covered by basic life insurance. The types and amounts of coverages available are not changing.

During the open season, employees in eligible positions will be able to enroll in the FEGLI program to increase or change current coverage without having a physical or answering any questions about their health. The earliest that newly elected coverage will be effective is September 1, 2005.

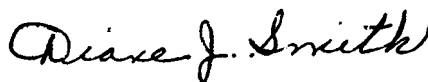
OPM will have a special FEGLI 2004 open season website set up prior to the start of the open season which will contain more information about the program.

The Federal Government established the FEGLI program on August 29, 1954. It is the largest group life insurance program in the world, covering over four million Federal employees and retirees, as well as many of their family members.

Additional information will be distributed when received.

- The Bulletin Editor (C.W. Watson) welcomes your opinions, ideas, and suggestions. Correspondence from individuals and organizations is welcome. All correspondence must have the name and location of the originator, in the event there is a need to reach the author for additional information.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



DIANE J. SMITH
Director, Civilian Personnel Advisory
Center

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1 Ea President of AFGE Local 3176, IAFF Local F267, IAM&AW Local 2424, NFFE
(Locals 178 and 2058), FOP Local 116F

APG ADVISORY CENTER

Aberdeen Proving Ground

22 July 2004

Please call for an appointment

Commercial: (410) 278-XXXX

DSN: 298-XXXX

Visit our website:

<http://www.apg.army.mil/garrison/cpac>

Office of the Director

Fax: 278-7652

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Department of the Army

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